

CHAPTER 5.0 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public involvement effort for the US-93 Corridor Environmental Assessment (EA) was designed to meet the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements while keeping the residents, stakeholders, and resource agencies apprised of the Project. The specific goal of the public involvement process was to support the EA process and develop understanding and support by local governments, interested agencies, and the general public for the Build Alternative. The most significant objectives of this plan included the following elements:

- Clearly present an updated schedule and activities for the EA and completion of the Project;
- Further build upon the earlier Project¹, communications, and information gathered through previous public involvement efforts;
- Clearly identify the public's issues, concerns and future needs for the roadway;
- Educate the public and stakeholders regarding the existing conditions, projected needs and related technical issues affecting the potential alternatives and final configuration for the roadway,
- Reestablish the Purpose and Need statement and goals for the corridor; and
- Provide clear, understandable written, graphic and visual information to effectively convey Project issues, needs, alternatives and the Build Alternative.

The public involvement activities completed for the EA built on earlier public involvement efforts associated with previous planning and environmental studies along the Project Corridor. Due to this work, the public involvement efforts for this EA focused on confirming issues raised during scoping and planning, and gathering comments on the feasible and recommended alternatives.

A very brief summary of the public involvement activities completed as part of the initial Project is included for reference in Section 5.3.

5.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Stakeholders were invited from local governments in Jerome City and Jerome County, Jerome Highway District, North Side Canal Company, members of the US-93 Citizen Committee and the Jerome Water and Sewer District. Corridor property owners, business operators and the general public were also invited and included at appropriate times in the process. The remainder of this Chapter summarizes the public involvement activities that were implemented and highlights of the results.

5.1.1 Activities

The following activities and supporting tools were implemented as part of the public involvement plan to appropriately engage area residents, businesses and affected local governments and resource agencies in the process. These included:

- *Stakeholder Meeting #1* – to introduce the current corridor access management concept plan alternatives and gather comments;

¹ US-93 Needs Assessment Project

- *Future Land Use Discussion Session* – to understand the planned and potential future land uses along and around the corridor;
- *Public Open House* – to present and gather comments on the recommended alternative; and
- *Public Hearing* – planned to afford formal public review and comment regarding the draft EA document.

5.1.2 Supporting Tools and Communications

- *Mailing list* – a mailing list was developed to include all local governments, affected agencies and corridor residents and businesses within a ¼ mile of the corridor. The mailing list was used for distribution of invitation to upcoming activities including the public open house and the public hearing;
- *Introductory letter and Project Kick-off* – an introductory letter introducing the new Project consultant, explaining the current status of the Project and inviting stakeholders to the first stakeholder meeting was sent to local governments, affected agencies, and key stakeholders;
- *Media announcements and advertisements* – media announcements were sent to local newspapers, television and radio stations to announce upcoming public events, public open house, and the public hearing. Announcements included text media releases and paid advertisements illustrating the corridor and inviting attendance at the upcoming public meeting; and
- *Comment forms* – comment forms were provided as part of the public meeting to afford participants an opportunity to register their comments regarding the recommended alternative. Input from the comment forms is included in the summary results highlights from the public meeting shown below.

5.1.3 Previous Public Involvement Efforts as Part of the US-93 Needs Assessment

A series of events and activities were implemented as part of the previous Project efforts for the US-93 Needs Assessment. These events and activities were planned to integrate fully into the planning process and satisfy the NEPA requirements. In general, those activities included initial public and local government scoping meetings, organization of the US-93 Committee to discuss issues and identify development potential and preliminary access management plans, and meetings with corridor property owners to discuss preliminary access management plans and alignments. The public, local governments, affected agencies, corridor residents and stakeholders were then all invited to review and discuss specific revised corridor alignments and access management plans. The effort included the use of a Project mailing list, distribution of six Project newsletters, presentations to selected organizations, and media releases as needed to provide appropriate notification of upcoming public events. The results from these events were used as a basis for the design of the public involvement efforts for the current Project.

- *Public meeting #1: July 2000* – Jerome and Shoshone – Project kick-off/issues scoping;
- *Interagency meeting: August 2000* – discuss issues and preliminary access management concepts;
- *Property Owner's meeting: October 2000* – to present and gather comments regarding preliminary access management concepts;

- *Jerome County/Jerome Highway District meeting:* November 2000 – to discuss preliminary access management concepts, initial alignment alternatives and corridor cultural resources;
- *Neighborhood meeting:* February 2002 – to discuss Project status, cultural resource issues and possible alternatives to avoid potentially eligible historic properties and to gather comments;
- *Commissioner's meeting:* March 2002 – to discuss Project Corridor status, current access management alternatives and gather comments; and
- *Idaho Transportation Department (ITD)/Team Planning meeting:* April 2002 – to discuss Project status and determine next steps.

5.1.4 Meetings as Part of this Environmental Assessment

Below is a list of the meetings and attendees. Also included is a brief description of the meeting and decisions that were made.

5.1.4.1 Access Management and Concept Plans Meeting: November 4, 2004

A meeting with local governments and related agencies was held on Thursday, November 4th 2004 at the Jerome Recreation Center in Jerome, Idaho. Meeting attendees were invited via the introductory letter described above which was sent on October 11th, 2004. The purpose of the meeting was:

- To present and discuss the initial access management concept plans; and
- To seek consensus on four primary points:
 - 1) Maximum ½ mile access to US-93 at public roads (500 South, 450 South, 400 South, etc);
 - 2) Allow existing intermediate access (between ½ mile public access points) until land is re-developed and the land use changes;
 - 3) Jerome County Planning and Zoning to require developers to create frontage connecting roads to ½ mile access points at public roads (if not developed as part of the ITD reconstruction Project); and
 - 4) Jerome Highway District to agree to maintenance of new public frontage roads (if constructed to Jerome Highway District standards).

The meeting was attended by representatives from the ITD, City of Jerome, Jerome County, Jerome Highway District, North Side Canal Company, a major corridor business representative and the consultant team. The meeting began with an overview of the status of the corridor and related issues followed by a presentation of the current concept alternatives and access management options. The presentation was supported by large scale corridor aerial maps depicting the conceptual alternative alignment and location of access alternatives. This presentation was followed by an informal open discussion on the concept alternative and related issues.

Unanimous agreement was reached by all attendees including both policy setting entities, Jerome County and City of Jerome, for the following principles:

- Maximum ½ mile public access at public roads²;
- Allow intermediate access (between ½ mile access points, primarily via right-in/right-out opportunities) until land is re-developed – then connect via frontage roads;
- Jerome County Planning and Zoning to require developers to create frontage connecting roads to ½ mile access points at public roads; and
- Jerome Highway District agrees to maintenance of new public frontage roads, if they are built to their standards.

5.1.4.2 Future Land Use Meeting: February 17, 2005

Effective planning for the US-93 corridor is closely related to the future land uses of property adjacent to the roadway. In order to understand the potential future land uses, it was determined that a collective discussion among the related entities should be held.

Therefore, a meeting was held with local governments, planning and zoning representatives and affected agencies on February 17th, 2005 at the Jerome City Council chambers. The specific purpose of the meeting was to discuss and identify potential future development along the study corridor for use in development of the No Build Alternative. The meeting was attended by representatives from ITD, the City of Jerome, Jerome County, Jerome Highway District, the Jerome Water and Sewer District, Jerome County Planning and Zoning, Jerome Economic Development, and the consultant team.

The meeting began with an overview of what is already known about the planned development along the corridor and the existence of the ½ mile wide Commercial Overlay Zone created by Jerome County. This information was developed through preliminary research with the City of Jerome, Jerome County planning department, known private developers, and a visual reconnaissance of the corridor. Following the overview, participants were encouraged to provide input regarding other known development projects or plans that are highly likely along the Project Corridor. The highlights of comments received are listed below.

- The primary commercial development area is ¼ mile wide each side of US-93 center line, with wider commercial development anticipated near the I-84/US-93 interchange;
- Development outside of the ¼ mile (each side of US-93) commercial corridor will likely be mixed use and residential;
- Crossroads Point Business Center development (at the northwest corner of the I-84/US-93 interchange) is a mixed-use development planned to include a new hospital, convention center, possibly professional offices, restaurants, and four to six motels;
- A new 85 home subdivision around the 93 Golf Ranch is planned and has been proposed for County approval;
- “Big box” development may occur if not specifically limited or controlled by Jerome County ordinance and development standards;
- Other potential development may include, transportation/distribution hub facilities, mixed use commercial and planned installation of a major fiber optic line from the 93 Technical Park (northeast of the SH-25/US-93 intersection) south along US-93 to

² Jerome County and the City of Jerome want formal action (recommend approval) by the ITD Transportation Board on the proposed ½ mile access management plan as soon as possible to support their subsequent ordinance change.

Twin Falls and west along SH-25 into Jerome. This may promote development of other technology-related businesses; and

- Three key related issues were raised:
 - 1) Jerome County will need to develop ordinances regarding access, setbacks, landscaping, etc. to support the appropriate development within the adjacent to the commercial overlay zone;
 - 2) New accesses will need to conform to the new access policy and may require frontage roads provided by developers and built to Jerome Highway District standards; and
 - 3) Corridor facility development should accommodate a bicycle and pedestrian pathway through the corridor as proposed in the Jerome County plan.

5.1.4.3 Public Open House: May 26, 2005

A public open house was held for area residents, stakeholders and the general public to view and comment on the recommended corridor Build Alternative and access management concept. The open house was held on Thursday, May 26th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Jerome City Council chambers. Invitations to the meeting were sent from the Project mailing list and notifications were provided via a media release and newspaper advertisement. The newspaper advertisement was published in the North Side News on Thursday, May 19th and in the Times News on Sunday, May 22nd, 2005. The open house was attended by 30 area residents and stakeholders, plus representatives from ITD and the consultant team. Comments were gathered by the planning team on flip charts and via comment forms. In general, those attending were very supportive of the recommended build alternative and access management concept. The highlights of comments received are listed below.

- Three lanes (center being turn or passing lane) with some entry lanes and frontage roads would accomplish the needs;
- The bike path is great and hopefully the ½ mile crossing will work if the traffic gets really heavy without proposed signals. Prefer bike path on east side (currently planned along the west side of US-93);
- Liked full access at ½ mile;
- Concern for losing direct access to commercial property;
- Concern for loss of trees along the 93 Golf Ranch (east side of the highway);
- Can width be reduced if center lane is removed;
- What about the phasing? Desire to start reconstruction on the south end first;
- Question the need for such an elaborate Project; and
- It will take too long to construct the four lane highway between Crossroads Parkway and SH-25. 2010 construction date is a disaster if Crossroads Point Business Center is built.

5.1.4.4 Public Hearing: October 23, 2007

A public hearing will be held on October 23, 2007 from 4 to 7 PM at the Idaho Department of Fish and Game located adjacent to the US 93 corridor. The public hearing provides an opportunity for individuals and stakeholder to make comments regarding the Build Alternative. Efforts to inform the public regarding the hearing included letters sent to

adjacent property owners, advertisements in local newspapers, and roadside banners with public hearing information. This Environmental Assessment will be made available for public review for more than 30 days. Comments received at the public hearing regarding the Build Alternative will be addressed.